

Critically analyze the salient features of Plato's Republic. Do you think that some of its features are valid, even today? (2018-CSS).

## 1. Introduction:

Ari Plato was an Athenian political philosopher born around 427 BCE, in Greek city state. His political thoughts were influenced by the conscious political environment of time. Plato's work "The Republic", "The statesman" and "The laws" along with many dialogue go down in history as the one of greatest works on political philosophy.

### 1.2. Context of his political thoughts:

Plato, despite being educated enough, declined the invitation of joining public office as he believed that a state that killed his friend & teacher, Socrates, a virtuous man, did not deserve any loyalty.

Another catalyst was the rule of "30 tyrants" after the Athens lost in Peloponnesian wars against sparta. It was in these contexts Plato developed his political thoughts.

## 2. The Republic: mementorial work of Plato:-

Plato wanted to reform his society, remedying whole Athenian life. This is what made him the philosopher of Ideals; the ideal ruler, ideal citizenship and the Ideal state. All three governed by the idea of Justice which means harmony, everyone occupying and performing their concerned tasks. This philosophy of Plato is contained in his book 'The Republic'.

It is Plato's most famous dialogue that best represents his philosophy. It is naturally divided into five parts.

### 2.1. Parts of Book:

- ↳ **Book I**: The Introductory part
- ↳ **Book II, III, IV**: Focuses on the instincts of human nature i.e., reason, spirit & appetite. It also gives the concept of Justice.
- ↳ **Book V, VI, VII**: Gives the concept of "Ideal state" and rule of philosophy.
- ↳ **Book VIII, IX**: Presents the topic of preservation of state and philosophy.
- ↳ **Book X**: Rather detached part of the dialogue.

### 3. Salient features of Republic:

'Republic' is the most important work of Plato and also the most significant for philosophical foundation. The subjects covered and ideas introduced in this book makes it significant.

Following are some distinct features of "The Republic":

#### 3.1. Organic Concept of state:

For Plato state is an magnified form of an individual. The interests of the states are the amplified interests of the individuals. The instincts of individuals are reflected in state.

#### 3.2. Ethico-political nature:

The philosophy of Plato is basically ethico-political in nature. According to Plato:

"A man is a member of state; state is a moral entity."

#### 3.4. Concept of revolution:

In the VIII and IX book, Plato gives five different types of regimes and how they

Change from one to another.

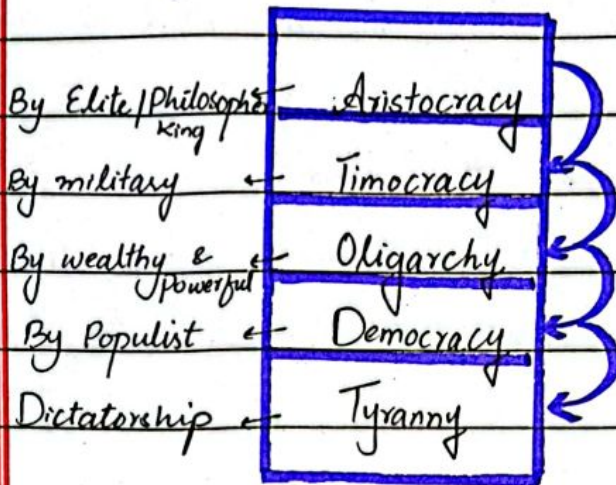


fig: Regimes in republic.

### 3.5. Ideal State:

The most important feature of "The Republic" is its theory of Ideal state. A Utopian state that is based on the concept of Justice, that is achieved through a system of education and communism.

### 3.6. Platonic Justice:

Plato's theory of Justice is based on the concept of justice; for Plato justice is every man gets its dues, based on his instinct

Lust → Artisans

Spirit → Auxillaries

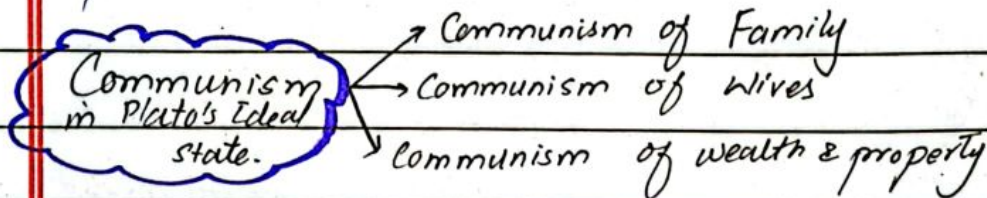
Reason → Philosopher King

### 3.8. Platonic education:

In order to ensure Justice and bring out the dominant instinct of a man, Plato gave us system of education; a state education system. It is the duty of state to provide with education.

### 3.9. Concept of Communism:

Plato's concept of communism was a goal to achieve ideal state. Communism of family, wives and property was sketched out in the Republic.



### 3.10. Virtue is Knowledge:

The most prominent concept of Plato was "Virtue is Knowledge". Plato believed that absolute truth exists and can be achieved. He designed his system of education to ensure the achievement of virtue. According to Plato:

"Justice is greatest virtue".

## 4. Relevancy in Modern Times:

Although Plato was the philosopher of his time, but his philosophy transcends the political challenges of his time and reached the modern political context of today. Many points of his philosophy as depicted in "The Republic" still find their significance in today's world.

### 4.1. System of education and Examination:

Plato's proposed system of education, is very significant even for today. It proposes a system that will educate people according to their capabilities and bring-out the best talent hidden.

Plato introduced the concept of examination both physical and psychological, which is still applicable.

### 4.2. Pioneer of Gender Equality:

Plato is the pioneer of gender equality. The rights given to women in his "Republic" are the rights, a 21<sup>st</sup> century's woman is

still fighting for. "Republic" gave the equal rights of education and even rule to women. It's the most modern concept that at "Republic" gave centuries ago.

#### 4.3. Concept of Justice:

The concept of Justice given in "The Republic" is basically the idea of right man for the right job without interfering in each other's work. The concept of Justice still applies to the various departments of government, to work in their individual capacities without interfering with one another.

#### 4.4. Criticism on Democracy:

"The Republic" denounced "Democracy" by calling it a mob rule, where power is given to the people who can not manage it. It soon turns to tyranny.

Today's world sees that in countries like Africa where people are not educated enough to rule through democracy even the founder of US declared it the worst form of government.

#### 4.5. Government of Technocrats:

Like Plato's opinion in "The Republic" many modern notions criticize democracy or the rule by ordinary politicians. Instead the trained technocrats, people experts in their domains can govern better. The idea of Republic aligns with the modern ideas.

#### 5. Conclusion:

"The Republic" is the greatest work by Plato and a masterpiece of philosophy. Despite being criticized for the utopian ideas, one can not neglect the pedagogical importance of this masterpiece. It laid the ground for upcoming political philosophies. In today's world the criticism of democracy by Plato, and criticism on Plato led to the establishment of modern democracy, which has overcome the fear of tyranny by keeping a check through constitutions and election. The concepts of "The Republic" still find their importance in today's world and is a source of learning even today.